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ABSTRACT

This report examines the dimensions, causes, and consequences of the dropout problem for California youth aged 12-17. School enrollment data and data from the 1976 Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Survey of Income and Education (SIE) were used to assess the current dropout rate. SIE statistics were also used to describe the age, sex, ethnic background, family income, employment status, and marriage rate characteristics of the dropout population. The dropouts' reasons for leaving school are analyzed in terms of those forces within the school which create dissatisfaction and alienation and those forces outside the school (jobs, marriage, child bearing) which attract students away from school. Personal and public costs of dropping out in the areas of employment and welfare dependency, pregnancy and child bearing, violence and vandalism, and juvenile delinquency are assessed. A review of California programs dealing with the dropout problem includes descriptions and evaluations of attendance and truancy programs, continuation high schools, counseling programs, independent study programs, and vocational education programs. General conclusions which provide a framework for public discussions are offered. (Author/BE)

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SCHOOL DROPOUTS

A Discussion Paper

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INTRODUCTION

California youth under the age of 17 are expected to be in school. Most adolescents indeed follow the expected pattern, i.e., they graduate from high school and enter the workforce or college in their late teen years. Some young people, however, fail to fulfill this expectation and as a result find themselves in a sort of aimless limbo; they are not enrolled in school, not working and not in serious trouble.

In this report we have attempted to determine how many youth aged 12-17 have dropped out of this "mainstream" setting and what happens to them. Once these youth leave school, what do they do? Do they go to jail? Work? Get married? This report analyzes what is known about the size and composition of the dropout group, and their age and ethnic background.

We have examined relevant literature to determine what is known about why students drop out and formulated a set of factors that are normally associated with leaving school early.

There are public costs as well as personal costs associated with school dropouts. We have examined the costs of unemployment and welfare, early marriage and pregnancy, violence and vandalism, and juvenile delinquency in estimating the costs of school dropouts.

The report also describes some of the programs that address adolescents who leave school early. This information was collected by interviews with persons in the education and youth field and discussions with young people enrolled in various dropout prevention and alternative education programs. We have attempted to identify general themes in

successful programs. Our findings and conclusions focus on policy issues appropriate for legislative action in seeking to identify ways to deal effectively with the dropout problem.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROBLEM

School attendance is compulsory to age 18, and children below that age who leave school normally do so either by graduation or by passing a proficiency examination. There are few statutory exceptions to this compulsory school attendance requirement. This indicates how strongly as a community we expect school attendance to be the dominant activity pattern for young people. This fact also indicates how strongly our society believes that children who are not in school are "different," "undesirable," "bad," or even "inimical to the welfare of other children." Only the following children are exempt from school attendance:

> children of filthy or vicious habits;
>
> children suffering from contagious or infectious diseases;
>
> children whose mental or physical disability is such as to cause attendance to be inimical to the welfare of other pupils;
>
> children whose physical or mental condition is such as to prevent or render undesirable attendance at school or application to study; or
>
> children over 16 where personal services are necessary for their dependents.[1]

Nonetheless, school teachers, daily newspapers and young people themselves indicate that a significant number of children are not enrolled in school, or are enrolled but attend so rarely that their connection with school is insignificant.

The Children's Defense Fund conducted a door-to-door survey of students out of school in America by census tracts in nine states during 1973-74.[2] They found that 5.4 percent of all children ages 6-17 were out of school for at least one quarter of the school year, whereas 19.6 percent of the 16- and 17-year-olds were out of school for at least one quarter of the school year. The survey found that children who were out of school were characterized by their "differentness" from the normal children: they were not White, or White but not middle class; did not speak English; were poor; needed special help with seeing, hearing, walking, reading, learning, adjusting, or growing up; were pregnant or married at age 15; or were not smart enough or too smart.[3]

Interviews and case histories of these children[4] provide a compelling picture of exclusion and differentness for children who ultimately leave school, which begins years before the child actually leaves school. Children who are school dropouts frequently have histories of delinquency, either in or out of school. School dropouts are in general lower than average in measures of self-esteem and feelings of personal efficacy and occupational aspiration.[5]

School dropouts frequently have had poor academic records and high rates of absenteeism and truancy. Dropping out is frequently the last step in several years of difficulty with the school environment,

including suspensions or expulsion. Children leave school to avoid settings in which their poverty is made public, or settings in which they are forced to reveal their problems with an alcoholic father, a personal bedwetting problem, or a mother who works the streets. Segregated education through special schools or classes for problem children are frequently viewed by the children who drop out as a signal that "the school gave up," "the school decided I was a dummy," or "the school needed a place to put all the kids they would rather see leave." Similarly, actions to classify children into categories were perceived by the students as exclusionary and signs of a lack of human interest by the school. They seemed to feel that, "the school makes its decision without ever talking to me or seeing me; just on the basis of the number on that piece of paper."[6]

It is also clear from interviews and surveys that school dropouts and their parents understand that the future is not bright for children who leave school. Schools confer credentials, and credentials are a critical determinant of future employment, marital status and future opportunities. Many school dropouts come from families where the parents left school early. The family has suffered economic and social consequences because the parent(s) never finished school. Some dropouts, therefore, have a clear understanding that they may well be permanently illiterate, unemployed, delinquent, rebellious and welfare dependent. In spite of this awareness, the school does not offer them an alternative to permanent labelling as a failure, a dropout and/or a loser.

HOW MANY SCHOOL DROPOUTS?

How many young people are out of school in California? What figures exist about children who are not in the system set up by society for "normal" 12-17 year olds? If there is a significant number of such youth in California, who are they? What are their ages, ethnic backgrounds, special characteristics and major activities?

National school enrollment figures are available annually from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. As shown in Table 1, in 1978 approximately 99 percent of the children under age 14 were enrolled in school. From 80 to 93 percent of the children ages 14-17 (high-school-age youth) were enrolled in school depending on sex and ethnic background. These figures are substantially similar for males and females, and for Black, Hispanic, and White and other students. The only significant difference in national population data is the figure for high school youth of Hispanic origin: 80.4 percent of the Hispanic males ages 16-17, and 86.2 percent of the Hispanic females ages 16-17, were enrolled in school.

Based on these national figures, one would expect to find 6,028 children ages 12 and 13 out of school and 96,065 children ages 14-17 out of school, or approximately 100,000 young people not attending school in California.

Estimates based on data specific to California, however, indicate that possibly three times as many young people ages 12-17 are out of school in California. One way to measure this number of children is to compare total population estimates with actual school enrollment for

specific ages. Such a comparison is provided in Table 2, which shows that approximately 223,330 children ages 12-17 are not enrolled in public or private schools. Using school enrollment, however, is an imprecise measure because enrollment data, which is gathered by public school officials, may underestimate school enrollment in public and private schools. Such data also overestimates enrollment by only counting annually at the beginning of the school year, thus including children who are chronically absent, suspended, or under other disciplinary action and not actually attending school.

Because of deficiencies in school enrollment data, we have relied primarily on data provided by the 1976 Survey of Income and Education (SIE)[7], conducted by the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, to estimate how many young people were out of school. The survey is a random sample of California households, designed to reflect the income and racial composition of the state and to correct the 1970 Census undercount of children living in poverty. It was conducted to provide a reliable state-by-state count of children eligible for federal funds under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Household members were asked to describe their major activity and could answer working, going to school, keeping house or other. Using the response to this question, we were able to estimate the number of young people who were actually out of school.

We estimated that in 1976 approximately 300,000 children ages 12-17 were out of school. Table 3 demonstrates the household responses to the question of major activity by young people. As a major activity, the figures show that 4.6 percent of children ages 12-17 were working, 87.1

percent were in school, and 8.3 percent were looking for work, housekeeping, or other. Thus, the total number of children who were out of school and unemployed was 193,120. There were another 108,423 for whom work was more of a primary activity than school.

Another way of examining the number of school dropouts is to determine how many children who entered high school were still attending school in their senior year. Table 4 provides a 10-year review of such high school attrition rates. While such measures do not provide a count of the out-of-school youth at any one time, they provide a measure of trends in the incidence of school dropouts. High school attrition rates have increased from 12 percent in 1970 to 22 percent in 1979. This shows an 83 percent increase in attrition rates over the 10-year period--clear evidence that the problem of school dropouts is becoming an even more significant problem than the 300,000 out-of-school youth would otherwise indicate.

TABLE 1

National School Enrollment Statistics: 1978

(Percentage of Enrollment)

All Races: Total		
Age 10-13	99.0	
Age 14-15	98.4	
Age 16-17	89.1	
All Races:	**Male**	**Female**
Age 10-13	98.8	99.2
Age 14-15	98.4	98.4
Age 16-17	89.5	88.8
White and Other:		
Age 10-13	98.9	99.2
Age 14-15	98.3	98.5
Age 16-17	88.9	88.4
Black:		
Age 10-13	98.8	99.1
Age 14-15	99.0	98.0
Age 16-17	92.8	89.6
Spanish Origin:		
Age 10-13	97.8	98.2
Age 14-15	94.0	96.6
Age 16-17	80.4	86.2

Source: "School Enrollment, Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1978," Population Characteristics Series, p. 20, No. 335, Bureau of the Census, April 1979.

TABLE 2

California Public and Private School Enrollment: 1978

Age	Total Population		Enrolled in School		Not Enrolled	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Total
12	367,851	100	348,123	94.6	19,728	5.4
13	385,605	100	359,856	93.3	25,749	6.7
14	390,394	100	382,876	98.1	7,518	1.9
15	401,875	100	376,791	93.8	25,084	6.2
16	402,164	100	354,170	88.1	47,994	11.9
17	406,649	100	309,392	76.1	97,257	23.9
Total	2,354,538	100	2,131,208	90.5	223,330	9.5

Source: Department of Finance Population Estimates and School Enrollment Figures, data run provided to AOR in November 1979.

TABLE 3

California Youth Aged 12-17: Major Activity

Age	Total Population		Attending School		Not Attending School					
					Total		Working		Other[a]	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
12	405,658	100	402,250	99.2	3,408	0.8	0	0	3,408	0.8
13	375,910	100	372,654	99.1	3,256	0.9	0	0	3,256	0.9
14	406,569	100	351,081	86.4	55,507	13.6	12,768	3.1	42,721	10.5
15	367,479	100	318,770	86.7	48,709	13.2	12,220	3.3	36,489	9.9
16	398,630	100	324,369	81.4	74,262	18.6	22,200	5.5	52,062	13.1
17	378,613	100	262,194	69.3	116,419	30.7	61,235	16.2	55,184	14.5
Total	2,332,856	100	2,031,315	87.1	301,543	12.9	108,423	4.6	193,120	8.3

[a]Looking for work, keeping house or other major activity.

Source: U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare 1976 Survey of Income and Education, AOR Data Display.

TABLE 4

School Enrollment Attrition Between
The Ninth And Twelfth Grades
1970 Through 1979

Entering Ninth Grade		Entering Twelfth Grade[a]		Percent Decrease Between Ninth And Twelfth Grades
Year	Number Enrolled	Year	Number Enrolled	
1967	316,761	1970	278,452	12
1968	326,803	1971	279,046	15
1969	337,640	1972	288,319	15
1970	339,470	1973	283,157	17
1971	349,900	1974	286,095	18
1972	359,227	1975	289,293	20
1973	356,537	1976	288,319	19
1974	357,817	1977	285,868	20
1975	364,701	1978	288,117	21
1976	368,831	1979	286,679	22

[a]Note: Because enrollment data are based on counts made at the beginning of each school year (October), they fail to include students who drop out during their twelfth year (i.e., between the period October through May) and, therefore, underestimate the actual number of dropouts.

Source: Attrition Rates in California Public Schools, Personal and Career Development Services Unit, State Department of Education (undated).

WHO ARE THESE SCHOOL DROPOUTS?

Using data on individual and family characteristics provided by the SIE survey, it is possible to provide some general descriptions of age, sex, ethnicity and family income for those youth who are not attending school.

AGE

Most of the 300,000 out-of-school youth are over 14 years old. From the figures reviewed in Table 3, it is clear that very few 12- and 13-year-olds are out of school, and none are working. Upon reaching high school, however, the number of children leaving school increases sharply.

SEX

Virtually the same number of young women leave school as young men. This finding contradicts the conventional wisdom that most dropouts are males. Once out of school, more young men are working compared to young women (43 percent of the males are employed compared to 28 percent of the females).

ETHNIC BACKGROUND

SIE data indicates that minorities are represented in the out-of-school population in slightly higher percentages compared to their percentage of the population. In other words, minorities are slightly more apt to drop out of school than other young white people. Hispanic young people represent 21 percent of the youth population and 23 percent of the out-of-school youth. Blacks represent 8.2 percent of the youth population and 8.5 percent of the out-of-school youth. This finding,

presented in Table 5, contradicts the generally held notion that dropping out of school occurs predominantly among minority youth.

Once out of school, however, the major activities of ethnic groups are substantially different. Blacks are significantly underrepresented among the youth who are out of school and working. While Blacks represent 8.5 percent of all out-of-school youth, only 4.5 percent of those who are working are Black. Viewed another way, less than 19 percent of all Blacks not attending school are working as compared to 32 percent of the Hispanics not attending school who are working and 40 percent of the out-of-school Whites who are working. The remainder of these out-of-school youth are either looking for work, keeping house or engaging in activities listed as "other" by the SIE survey.

FAMILY INCOME

SIE figures presented in Table 6 indicate that a higher proportion of youth from low-income and working class families are school dropouts. Youth living in families with less than $10,000 annual income comprise 26.4 percent of the 12-17 year olds. However, they comprise 32.8 percent of the out-of-school youth. Youth in families with annual incomes between $10,000 and $20,000 comprise 34.8 percent of the population, but 38.2 percent of those who are out of school. Youth from families earning over $20,000 annually comprise 38.8 percent of the population, and yet only 29 percent of those who are out of school.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Approximately one-third of the youth whose major activities were other than school attendance were employed. However, work as an

TABLE 5

Ethnic Distribution Of Youth Age 12 Through 17 By

School Attendance and Non-School Activity

	Total Population		Attending School		Not Attending School					
					Total		Working		Other	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Black	190,887	8.2	165,112	8.1	25,775	8.5	4,866	4.5	20,909	10.8
Hispanic	489,428	21.0	420,040	20.7	69,387	23.0	21,849	20.2	47,538	24.6
White and Other	1,652,411	70.8	1,446,290	71.2	206,378	68.4	81,707	75.4	124,671	64.6
Total	2,332,726	100	2,031,442	100	301,540	100	108,422	100	193,118	100

Source: U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare 1976 Survey of Income and Education, AOR Data Display.

TABLE 6

Distribution of Youth Age 12 Through 17

By Family Income By School Attendance And Non-School Activity

	Total Population		Attending School		Not Attending School					
					Total		Working		Other	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Under $10,000	616,667	26.4	517,884	25.5	98,781	32.8	26,384	24.3	72,397	37.5
$10,000-$20,000	810,789	34.8	695,337	34.2	115,453	38.2	44,617	41.2	70,836	36.7
Over $20,000	905,403	38.8	818,095	40.3	87,307	29.0	37,421	34.5	49,886	25.8
Total	2,332,859	100	2,031,316	100	301,541	100	108,422	100	193,119	100

Source: U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare 1976 Survey of Income and Education, AOR Data Display.

alternative to school was not equally available to young people depending on their family income, race and sex.

White out-of-school youth are more likely to be employed than minority youth. Blacks represent 8.2 percent of the age group, and only 4.5 percent of those employed, who were out of school. Hispanics represent 21 percent of the age group and 20.2 percent of employed youth. White youth represent 70.8 percent of the age group, but 75.4 percent were employed.

Although youth from higher income families were less likely to be out of school, those out of school were more likely to describe work as their major activity. Employed youth comprised 26.7 percent of those out of school in the lowest income bracket; 38.6 percent in the middle income bracket; and 42.8 percent in the higher income bracket.

Male out-of-school youth were much more likely to be working than out-of-school females. There were 43 percent of the out-of-school males who considered work a major activity, while only 28 percent of the out-of-school females considered work as a major activity.

MARRIAGE

SIE data indicate that relatively few (approximately one percent) of the youth population ages 12-17 were married. The marriage rate for those who were out of school, both employed and unemployed, was significantly higher than those in school, but still low: 3.3 percent of the employed youth were married, and 7.1 percent of those unemployed were married. The majority of the married, non-working youth were young women, whose major activity was keeping house. These figures are

supported by other SIE information indicating that an insignificant number of youth in this age group are heads of households or spouses of household heads. The majority are classified as "children" living with their parents. It was not possible to determine from the SIE data the extent to which young people who are out of school are themselves parents.

WHY DID THEY LEAVE AND WHAT ARE THEY DOING?

Quitting school can be the result of a complex set of factors which can be reduced to two common themes: 1) those forces within the school which create student dissatisfaction and alienation leading to a feeling of being "pushed out;" and 2) those forces outside the school which attract students away from school, such as jobs, marriage and child bearing. This section examines the pressures exerted by school dissatisfaction, employment expectations, marriage and pregnancy as a means of assessing the predominance of these "push-pull" forces.

The factors leading to a decision to leave school are not limited to simply being pushed out or conversely being pulled out, but obviously involve a complex interplay between the two. The conclusion from this analysis, however, is that the more dominant force is the failure of the educational system to adequately gauge and provide early intervention for those students whose growing dissatisfaction with school culminates in their dropping out.

DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOLS

Dropping out of school is frequently preceded by irregular attendance and truancy.[8] A recent Auditor General's report on attendance and absenteeism in California schools makes it clear that the difference between school enrollment figures and the SIE figures is explained by a high absenteeism rate.[9] For many young people, the connections with school may be so minimal that it is no longer their major activity, although they remain technically enrolled in school. As shown in the Auditor General's report, actual attendance levels in Fall 1978 were 90.8 percent of enrollment in elementary schools, 87.7 percent in

junior high schools and 81.4 percent in senior high schools. Reported attendance rates for average daily attendance accounting purposes were higher than the rates observed by the Auditor General. Health officials indicate that a normal absentee rate for health reasons would be about four to five percent per year.

Comparison of school attendance figures among school sites reveals the same complex set of factors associated with high school absenteeism in California that we have summarized as predictors of school dropouts. Attendance in schools in low-income areas (those with 10 percent or more students from families receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children) averaged only 75.9 percent. Urban senior high schools had the lowest attendance levels of any geographic type, which is consistent with the fact that, generally, higher poverty levels exist in urban areas. High schools with over 50 percent of the student body from racial or ethnic minorities also had comparatively low attendance (78.3 percent). Attendance declined noticeably in the afternoon and on Fridays. There was also low attendance in special education classes for children with learning disabilities.

The reasons cited for absenteeism by school administrators, attendance personnel, counselors, teachers and students are also virtually identical to national summaries of reasons why children drop out of school. Students are absent because of illness, dislike or boredom with school, social adjustment problems, family or personal matters, influence of friends and academic problems.

ACADEMIC HISTORY

Academic problems also are a cause for children dropping out of school.[10] Many school dropouts have been retained in a grade at least once. Many have had behavioral problems, with suspension and expulsion histories.[11] In many cases, dropouts have felt unable, emotionally or economically, to participate in extra-curricular activities such as athletics, school newspaper, yearbooks and class dances. Dropouts frequently have problems in reading and mathematics. Few of these children have had positive relationships with teachers, nor are they perceived favorably by most of their teachers.

A recent report by the Legislative Analyst indicates that in the past decade the achievement test scores of California students in grades seven through 12 have declined markedly, particularly in reading and language, and somewhat in mathematics.[12] It is appropriate to conclude that where schools are failing to produce achievement in all students, they also fail to attract and hold students.

The Analyst's study did not identify definitive causes for the drop in student achievement. The study cites the increasing presence of minorities and children from low-income families in the secondary school population; however, the study also cites a decrease in appropriate teacher assignment, a decrease in time spent in teaching basic skills, less homework and easier textbooks. The report also identifies other symptoms associated with dropouts: increasing absenteeism, drug and alcohol abuse, youth crime, and television watching.

EMPLOYMENT EXPECTATIONS

SIE data show that only one-third of the young people who have dropped out of school are employed. This suggests that employment is not a reasonable alternative to school attendance. In other words, it does not appear that young people leave the "mainstream" setting, which is school, and immediately enter the "mainstream" setting for adulthood, which is employment. State and national employment data give us some indications about why this is true.

Throughout the post-World War II period, unemployment rates for teens have been roughly two to three and one-half times greater than overall unemployment rates. Teenage employment, however, varies widely among teenage subgroups (i.e., females, ethnic minorities and those from low-income families). High unemployment among these subgroups appears to be strongly correlated with the degree to which they actively seek employment. As shown in Table 7, those subgroups with the lowest labor force participation rate have experienced the highest unemployment rates. The reasons for this are fairly obvious. If the chances for Black teenagers finding a job are extremely small, they soon quit looking and, therefore, are not counted as part of the labor force. One exception to this correlation is that unemployment rates among those enrolled in school and seeking work were generally lower than those not enrolled and seeking work, in spite of the fact that fewer full-time students were seeking work.

In 1977, 16-19 year olds had an unemployment rate of 18.4 percent in California, compared to a total work force unemployment rate of 8.2 percent. Certain subgroups of teens, however, experienced even higher

TABLE 7

Ten Year Comparison Of Labor Force Participation
And Unemployment Rates For Youth Aged
16 And 17 By Sex And Race

Age 16-17	Male	Female	White Males	Black Males	White Females	Black Female
Labor Force Participation Rate						
1977	50.3%	42.2%	53.8%	30.8%	45.8%	22.6%
1967	47.0%	31.0%	47.9%	41.2%	32.3%	22.8%
Unemployment Rates						
1977	19.5%	20.4%	17.6%	38.7%	18.2%	44.7%
1967	14.5%	14.8%	12.7%	28.9%	12.9%	32.0%

Source: California Youth Employment Report, Employment Development Department, 1978, pp. 2 and 15.

unemployment rates than that found among teenagers generally. There were higher unemployment rates for females, ethnic minorities, out-of-school youth and younger teens. Black males ages 16-17 actively seeking work were unemployed at rates twice that for White males of the same age. Similarly, White females were unemployed a full percentage point higher than White males, and Black females were unemployed at an extremely high rate of 44.7 percent.[13]

While teens overall tend to participate more often in the work force than they did 10 years ago, Black teenage participation has declined over the same 10-year period. Common explanations for lower participation rates among Black youth and other similarly affected teenage subgroups include:[14]

a) general discouragement on the part of the job seeker;

b) education and training inadequacies in the age group;

c) an increased supply of youth and women in competition for entry-level jobs;

d) racial prejudices in the job market; and

e) relatively larger numbers of minority teens living in central cities where job opportunities are scarce.

Moreover, whether enrolled in school or not, teens from low-income families are less likely to be in the labor force than those in higher-income families. Unemployment rates for teenagers are highest in low-income families.[15] This difference in labor force participation is greater for young women than young men from low-income families.

Most male teens work in blue collar trades (i.e., craft workers, operatives, transport operatives and laborers). Female teens are

employed in white collar professions, largely in clerical and sales positions and service fields. Nearly six percent of male teens are farm workers, and 1.4 percent of female teens are farm workers. Taken collectively, most teen workers are employed in the retail trade sector, particularly in metropolitan areas.

Teens work in jobs with low wages, requiring manual work with little prospect or incentive for continuous employment. They work in jobs that provide virtually no training, except in the most basic work habits.[16]

The chances of work as an alternative to school are not good. The very factors describing young people who are out of school are the same factors for those young people whose participation in the work force is smallest, and whose unemployment rate in the work force is highest. These factors are minority status, lack of a high school diploma, low-income families, central cities, and sex (a significant number are women). A review of the labor force material coupled with a review of school dropout information leads us to the stark conclusion that it is not the attraction of the labor force that is pulling them out of school, but rather it is the school, or their preception of the school, that is pushing them out or causing them to leave.

MARRIAGE AND PREGNANCY

A certain percentage of the youth who leave school spend all of their time at homemaking, or left school to form their own families. Our data are insufficient to indicate the role of parenting for young people who are out of school. These data do indicate, however, that marriage is not a descriptor of most out-of-school youth. Approximately

one-half of the 300,000 youth not attending school are females, and about one-fourth of these young women describe their major activity as "keeping house."

National data indicate that pregnancy and childbirth are frequent contributing factors when young women drop out of school. A national survey of labor market experience comparing high school graduates to non-graduates indicates that 56 percent of the White female school dropouts cited marriage or pregnancy as the reason for dropping out and 62 percent of the Black female dropouts cited marriage or pregnancy as the reason. Few women were employed prior to dropping out of school, but nearly one-half of both the White and Black dropouts were in the work force 10 months after leaving school. Whether marriage and pregnancy were reasons for dropping out of school, female dropouts became pregnant and/or got married in large numbers after leaving school and had an active need to join the labor force.[17]

Sexual activity and pregnancy are increasing among teens, particularly young teens.[18] National figures estimate that one-half the teenage population aged 15-19 are sexually experienced, while one-fifth of those aged 13-14 are sexually active. The percentage of sexually active teens has risen during the last decade, and the age when sexual activity begins is somewhat lower. Some sources suggest that the most rapid increase in early sexual activity has occurred recently among teens of families from non-minority and higher-income groups.

Sexual activity and contraceptive usage by teens are sporadic, although use of contraceptives and their effectiveness have increased in the last decade. There remains, however, a substantial number of teens

who are poorly informed about the reproductive process, cannot obtain contraceptives, or view their sexual activity as too infrequent for regular contraceptive use. Abortion has been used as a contraceptive measure by a large number of teens. Nationwide in 1974, 27 percent of the pregnancies to girls aged 15-19 and 45 percent of the pregnancies to girls aged 14 or younger were terminated by abortion.

Childbearing for teens under 14 has increased in the recent past, remained stable for girls 14-17, and declined slightly for the older teens. This compares to sharp declines in childbearing for women aged 20 and older. In California, there were 865 live births to girls under 15, and 52,957 live births to teens aged 15-19 in 1977.[19] Such births are largely unplanned, and more than two-thirds of the teenage pregnancies are not believed to be intended. Twenty-one percent of the births by teenagers nationally are out of wedlock and an additional 10 percent were conceived prior to marriage. Only six percent of the teenage girls 14 years and younger are married because of births. Most teens (94 percent), whether married or not, keep their babies. The remainder send the baby to live with relatives (2.5 percent) or give the baby up for adoption (3.5 percent). Thus, most teenage pregnancies result in the formation of a new family unit.[20]

The new families that result from this increase in sexual activity and child bearing are not stable. As noted, many teens with young children are not married. Teenage marriages are two to three times more likely to dissolve than marriage for couples in their 20's. Married teens with children are more likely to be economically disadvantaged in terms of occupation, income and assets than single teens of similar

socio-economic background. Women who give birth as teens have a larger family size and have their children closer together than families that form when the parents are in their 20's. In spite of recent programs to serve young pregnant women in high school, 80 percent of the pregnant women 17 and younger never complete high school, and 90 percent of the pregnant women 15 years or younger never complete high school.[21]

Pregnancy and marriage, therefore, are significant factors when teens drop out of school. Pregnancy is associated with significant school dropout rates, and the prognosis for stable family building or economic stability for teenage parents is poor. It is not clear whether pregnancy and marriage cause teens to drop out of school, or whether certain teens are motivated to leave school and begin their own families sooner, and do so through pregnancy.[22] It is clear that a large number of the out-of-school young people are parents and/or married, or soon will be. It is also clear that while such family building is not accomplished with great stability in terms of future success, it is accompanied by a greater need for steady income and reliable attachment to the labor force.

WHAT DOES IT COST?

The personal cost of dropping out of the mainstream appears to be high for young people. In addition to the personal costs, there are public costs attached to a variety of events which occur as part of the usual pattern of dropping out.

EMPLOYMENT AND WELFARE DEPENDENCY

Future employment prospects for school dropouts are bleak. The very reasons that prompt youth to leave the school setting (failure, differentness, and low-income families) make them poor candidates for successful employment. Although some of the dropouts will ultimately earn credentials, labor force participation will remain lower for dropouts than for high school and college graduates, regardless of age. In 1978, the unemployment rate for dropouts was more than twice that for high school graduates and three times that for college graduates.[23] It would appear that the decision to leave school permanently impairs the future of these young people.[24]

Further analysis of human or government costs of unemployment due to young people dropping out of school is difficult. Most analyses of youth employment do not distinguish between young people in school and working part or full-time, and young people whose major activity is employment. Undoubtedly, public welfare costs are higher for school dropouts over a lifetime as evidenced by a study of California's Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) caseload conducted by the RAND Corporation in 1976 which shows that virtually all (99 percent) of those families in the state headed by a female who did not complete high school were receiving AFDC benefits.[25] Undoubtedly, lifetime earnings

are lower; however, an individual's lifetime earning capacity or public welfare dependency is the result of a complicated interplay between the individual, the economy and numerous other factors.

PREGNANCY AND CHILDBIRTH

As already discussed, motherhood during the teen years has numerous personal problems, with documented associations between teenage motherhood and high divorce rates, high subsequent fertility and poverty. Teenage mothers rarely catch up to their later-bearing peers in school attainment. Teenage marriages are highly prone to disruption (72 percent of teenage marriages eventually dissolve) whatever the mother's age when the first child was born.[26] Furthermore, recent research at the Urban Institute[27] indicates that when data is controlled for income, race and family background and other factors, a young woman's age at the birth of her first child has a direct causal effect on her future income, education, family size and likelihood to receive welfare. In other words, actions to prevent unwanted early pregnancies can be expected to directly improve the life chances of young women.

The government cost of pregnancies to young women is high. A disproportionate number of young mothers come from poor families, and both the mothers and fathers have a low potential earning ability. Many of the teenage mothers receive welfare during pregnancy and for significant periods of time thereafter. In fact, the younger the mother is at the time of the first birth, the likelier she is to live in a household receiving AFDC benefits. This is particularly true of girls who become mothers at ages 15-17. (Younger mothers frequently remain with their parents; older mothers are likely to marry young men with jobs or obtain

jobs themselves.)[28] Moreover, the pregnancy itself is a prime cause in a series of events which lead to a high expectation of welfare dependency. Half the national AFDC payments in 1975 were made to households in which at least one member had given birth to a child at age 19 or lower. As discussed above, this series of events leading to dependency includes reduced educational attainment, reduced employment opportunities, larger families and poverty.

One estimate, prepared by Stanford Research Institute International (SRI), of the average annual cost of welfare dependency associated with teenage pregnancy and birth was $1,820 per year in 1979 dollars per mother and child recipient, and would apply to 30 to 40 percent of the women who gave birth at age 17 or younger in 1978. The annual costs in California for a teenage mother and one child who had no other income, were living alone and receiving AFDC payments are nearly $4,000. Such costs would continue for many years after the first birth.[29]

Medical costs for teenage births are high as well. As we have seen, 30 to 40 percent of teenage births will take place using Medi-Cal to pay for the costs of birth and any complications.[30] Teenage mothers and their babies suffer higher rates of malnutrition, low birth weights, birth complications and child defects than older mothers and their babies. Complications of pregnancy and birth are reported in one-fourth of the recent teenage pregnancies.[31] Pediatric costs for teenagers' children who have birth defects are high, and usually paid for through public programs. Medical costs, including both pediatric and maternity care for teen births averaged $3,108 for births to 14-year-old girls, and $2,620 per birth to girls ages 14-17. The SRI study projected that

on the average nationally, each teenage birth will cost $18,710 over time in public expenditures.[32] It is not possible to provide a direct extrapolation to the cost of teenage pregnancy in California. Clearly, however, the phenomenon of teenage parenthood is financially costly, as well as costly in human and personal terms.

VIOLENCE AND VANDALISM

Without suggesting a causal relationship, many of the factors common to schools with high dropout or absenteeism rates are also common to schools with high rates of violence or vandalism. Large schools and schools with larger classes experience more crimes against persons and property than schools where students develop personal relationships with staff. Metropolitan areas, both urban and suburban, have higher rates of violence and vandalism.

Student perceptions that discipline is unfair or capricious lead to violence or vandalism. In particular, violent students are more likely to feel school is irrelevant, that they have no power or control over school, and do not care about grades. Students who feel that grades or other incentives are awarded unfairly are more likely to commit vandalism. Neighborhood gang activity and high local crime rates are associated with trouble in school.

On the other hand, schools with fair but firm, predictable disciplinary procedures and mechanisms for student participation in decision-making are safer schools. Violence tends to decrease between the 7th and 12th grades, indicating that the most disaffected young people leave school early. This finding may correlate with our findings that dropouts increase sharply at entrance to high school. Vandalism rates are distributed evenly throughout the secondary school years.[33]

It is reasonable to infer that students who feel powerless, alienated, and cut off from success participate in acts of violence as a corollary to absenteeism and a prelude to dropping out of school. Sadly, the highest cost of violence is paid by other students who are of the same sex and age and who are the most frequent target for crimes against persons. Teachers and students run about the same risk of theft or robbery with a threat of force. In addition, community perceptions of unsafe schools undoubtedly lead to increased teacher and student stress, which leads to a poor teaching and learning environment.

Finally, vandalism, burglary and arson constitute a significant dollar loss to the secondary school system. These activities increased in the 1960's and leveled off through the early 1970's at a time when the dollar value of school property was increasing. Even if these activities are not now increasing in intensity or frequency, their cost is substantial. One expert estimated that nationwide losses of approximately $90 million in 1973 could be attributed to vandalism and arson.[34] The same author argues that stop-gap measures, such as the establishment of school security offices and installation of high technology property protection devices, will not solve the problem of attacks on property and people by young students. Solutions must be sought in programs and policies which develop student/staff communication, commitment to student success, and school experiences relevant to young people.

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

Youth crime, like violence in the schools, is a persistent, publicly recognized youth problem. According to the 1975 Federal Bureau

of Investigation Uniform Crime Reports, 14 percent of all arrests in 1969 were youth; in 1974, 25 percent were youth. In California, juvenile arrests comprised 20 percent of all arrests in 1978, reflecting a reduction in juvenile arrests following 1976 state legislation which eliminated criminal arrest and locked detention of juveniles for actions which would not be an offense if committed by an adult.[35]

In general, youth crime is committed by alienated young people, the same young people who leave school. Such youth are unemployed, or underemployed; have poor school records; drop out more frequently; have low self esteem; are often from poor families and more likely to be Black or Hispanic.[36] Burglary and other property crimes are directly affected by dropout and attendance rates in nearby secondary schools (see Attendance and Truancy Programs in following section). In 1977, nearly 70 percent of all California Youth Authority commitments were for burglary, robbery, theft and auto theft.[37]

Although the causal relationship is not clear, youth crime and delinquency costs are associated with leaving school. Less than 20 percent of Youth Authority commitments in California in 1977 completed the 12th grade or graduated from high school, although the average age of young people was 17.4 years.[38]

Considering only state expenditures for handling juvenile offenders, the costs of youth crime are significant. The California Youth Authority had an institutional population of 4,660 on December 31, 1978, with an average length of stay of 11.3 months.[39] Each institutionalized offender cost $17,775 in the 1977-78 fiscal year. Another

6,700 young people were on parole from the Youth Authority in 1978, at an annual cost of approximately $2,300 per parolee. An additional 54,000 young people were on probation under local law enforcement supervision in 1978, and 6,000 young people were held in local juvenile facilities.[40]

Although reliable estimates of community cost to victims of youth crime are not available, such costs together with the data cited above, make it clear that the overall costs of alienated young people are high. Additionally, school failure and school leaving are commonly associated with such alienation.

PROGRAMS THAT EXIST TO SERVE SCHOOL DROPOUTS AND POTENTIAL DROPOUTS

We have described a bleak picture. California has some 300,000 young people between the ages of 12 and 17 (representing nearly 13 percent of the total age group) who are not in school. Those young people who leave school in their early teens will face critical and possibly permanent deficiencies in competing for a place in the work world. Further, the work world is largely closed to those young people right now. Their attempts at family formation and parenting are frequently disrupted and unsuccessful.

The cost to society is high: in early, unplanned pregnancies; in unprepared and angry future workers; and in high juvenile crime rates. The cost to young people is also high, in the pain of failure and in the closing of future options.

Problems with schools and learning dominate the decision to leave school. Schools have become the focal point for the transition from dependency (in school, in a parent's home) to independence (at work, in one's own home) for many young people.[41]

It is inherently unlikely that a single institutional model can provide a successful transition for the diverse population of California's young people. Because California relies primarily on an academic oriented, highly structured classroom model, it is not surprising that the transition is marred and unhappy for a significant percentage of young people. Schools remain, however, the primary resource for identification of this problem and for development of alternative models for assisting young people in moving to independence.

Even though the academic oriented classroom structure dominates the state's educational system, there are a number of programs to assist young people who are at risk of dropping out of schools.

In this section, we review several programs designed to serve young people in their transition to adulthood. To identify these programs, we reviewed literature on dropouts and potential dropouts. We also interviewed state-level educational staff and other experts to determine exemplary programs in the education field which are working to provide credentialling and skills for young people in nontraditional ways. We conducted on-site visits of many of these programs and discussed the program models with local staff and students to determine how the programs worked.

Findings from these reviews and the literature search are described for each type of program. General themes common to all programs and which appear to be critical to the success of any program aimed at reducing dropouts and improving attendance are as follows:

- Schools need to provide diverse learning opportunities and teaching styles and formats.

- Students need credentials reflecting diverse achievement. The credentials would require development of competency testing that reflects the differing backgrounds and diverse achievement of young people. Current testing and credentialling tend to focus on too narrow a range of academic competencies.

- Local agencies are the appropriate place to determine what programs suit local needs, and to assume responsibility for carrying out programs to meet those needs.

- State administrative and legislative bodies are the appropriate place to set goals, define state and local roles, and provide technical assistance and coordination among programs.

- Specific goals to reduce dropouts and increase attendance need to be assigned to local schools and such goals should be established and monitored at the state level.

- Most local agencies do not need more laws, regulations, new programs, or even more money; existing programs must focus on goals that identify an intent to promote diverse ways of serving young people and specify ways to monitor the achievement of those goals.

- Closer cooperation and coordination is needed in virtually all programs between the educational system and the community, particularly involving private sector business in shared programs to train and assist young people with their transition into employment.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES

Some of the social stress, personal pain and public cost that the dropout figures represent may be reduced by time alone. The size of this youth group has grown enormously, in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the total population, during the years 1960-1975. This increase in the number of young people relative to the size of the entire population has occurred as an anomaly following World War II in an otherwise general downward shift in the birth rate over the past 100 years. Commencing with the decade of the 1970's, the birth rate diminished reaching a record low in the latter part of the decade. As

a consequence, by the mid-1980's the relative size of the youth group ages 14-24 compared to other population groups will be smaller than at any time in our history. The number of 18 to 24-year-olds will be smaller in absolute numbers by 1995 than the number of young people today.

It is predicted by some sociologists[42] that, as a result of this rather significant demographic change, youth unemployment, youth crime rates, suicide rates and marital instability will all be reduced in the 1980's. In fact, young workers may be at a premium in the economy of the 1980's and 1990's.

School has absorbed the dramatic increase in young people over the past 20 years. It is not surprising, therefore, that the education system is strained and unable to deal flexibly with the large age group now moving through. It is appropriate, however, to expect that the schools will be able to deal more effectively with young people in the future as the age group declines.

The work setting has absorbed relatively small numbers of the increased youth population.[43] Participation by youth in the labor force has grown slowly over the past 15 years, and much of that growth has been in part-time employment while still enrolled in school. It is reasonable to expect the work place, like the school, to deal more flexibly and individually with young people in the future. It is appropriate to focus any resources which are freed up by a reduction in the age group on programs to increase the number of ways in which transition from school to work are made.

ATTENDANCE AND TRUANCY PROGRAMS

California law requires virtually all children under the age of 18 to be in school. Exemptions are few, and in most of those cases provisions are made for alternate, part-time education. We have seen from the reviewed data, however, that enrolled students with high absentee rates are as much a concern as students who have dropped out of school. Indeed, dropping out is frequently preceded by high absenteeism. The reasons students cite for absenteeism are virtually the same as those reasons that lead them to leave school altogether.

To enforce compulsory education requirements and provide records on the average daily attendance in a school program, a complex system of attendance accounting requirements is specified in state law and regulations. Most reports are based on attendance, rather than enrollment, and most require negative accounting, i.e., recording of absences rather than actual student time present. Reported average daily attendance is 93 percent of enrollment statewide; actual classroom attendance is substantially lower.[44] Attendance is lower in urban high schools, schools with a high percentage of families on AFDC, and schools with more than one-half their student body from racial/ethnic minorities.

Attendance and Apportionment Accounting

Our literature review identified concerns that the dual use of attendance reporting to justify funding and encourage maximum attendance for education purposes may be a problem.[45] Some sources, including the State Department of Education, have proposed separating funding from attendance monitoring (i.e., funding on the basis of enrollment) which would remove disincentives in the current system to question absences

claimed for illness. This would also reduce the time attendance staff now spend on counting and would allow a refocussing of staff to work with absent students.

Such a move toward membership or enrollment as a method for funding might reduce paperwork, refocus local resources on attendance problems from the student and community viewpoint, and could clarify school, student and parent attendance responsibilities. School attendance personnel, parents and community youth workers, on the other hand, believe that attendance accounting should be tightened to ensure that actual seat time is counted and that there should be increased financial incentives for reduced absenteeism.

We have concluded that the attendance accounting system should support identified goals for maximum attendance by clearly recording actual attendance. The system should also provide immediate information for attendance and counselling staff to identify overall attendance problems as well as individual student attendance problems. This should be coupled with a requirement that schools periodically make a public disclosure of attendance and absenteeism, which would focus staff and community attention on the problem.

The state should improve its monitoring of local attendance accounting, and provide technical assistance to upgrade local resources to assure improved attendance accounting and procedures. Such upgrading of attendance accounting may require legislative identification of goals and financial incentives for implementation.

School Attendance Review Boards

Each county office of education is required to maintain a School Attendance Review Board (SARB), pursuant to Chapter 1215, Statutes of 1974, consisting of representatives from the school district, county probation department, county welfare department and county superintendent of schools. These boards were created to address the needs of students with attendance and school behavior problems. The SARB's provide guidance and coordination of community services to assist families. The boards may present the problem to the county probation department, which may consider legal action to force parents to comply with compulsory attendance laws or to remove the child from his or her home. Districts may establish a district-level SARB, in addition to the countywide SARB.

From 1974 to 1976, SARB's could refer truants to the juvenile justice system. In 1976, juvenile law was revised by Chapter 1071, Statutes of 1976 (AB 3121), to require separate, nonsecure settings for juveniles committing offenses that would not be a crime if committed by an adult. Such facilities do not exist in most areas of the state. Therefore, SARB's are restricted to counselling, and alternative in-school and community educational programs as treatment for truancy and related behavioral problems. Some SARB's believe they need the ability to call on juvenile courts for enforcement of compulsory attendance. Parents also frequently express the need for legal backup to enforce attendance.

Successful SARB's appear to involve a full range of local resources and have the ability to involve community and in-school resources to suit individual and family needs, including counselling, alternative education programs, social services for family problems, and jobs or work experience programs.

Our findings indicate there is a need for state level leadership and encouragement to support efforts to increase the effectiveness of SARB's as a tool for coordination and identification of local resources, both inside and outside school. One solution might be to create a state-level SARB to provide policy direction, coordinate state resources, and identify and disseminate successful program strategies. It appears on the basis of our review that the creation of legal penalties for youth activities which are not criminal in nature is a mistake and, instead of legal sanctions, more leadership should be provided to SARB's to create local consortia of services to meet the needs of troubled young people.

Stay-in-School Programs

Some schools have developed strict truancy programs directed at returning young people to school. We examined two such stay-in-school programs, operated under joint sponsorship by the schools and local law enforcement agencies. Young people of school age are picked up by the police and delivered to a reception center staffed by school attendance personnel. These attendance counsellors either contact the parents and ask that the student be returned to school, or provide parent and student counselling prior to returning the student to school.

Programs in Los Angeles and Fresno both report a favorable impact on attendance. In Los Angeles, students who were picked up showed a 43 percent reduction in non-illness absences, based on a comparison of each student's attendance between the months before and after pick-up.[46] Fresno showed a reduction of 10 percent in high school absences between the month before the program operation and the first month of

operation.[47] The operation of the program improves parent-school communication. Students and parents become more aware and supportive of attendance requirements, and loitering around the school grounds decreases.

Los Angeles reported that juvenile burglary arrests decreased significantly (as much as 40 percent in some areas) where the program was initiated in part at the request of merchants in school neighborhoods. The reduction in daytime burglary arrests due to the Operation Stay-in-School Program has created substantial community support.

Both Fresno and Los Angeles districts claim increased learning time, improved student academic achievement, better social adjustment and better school/community relations due to the program. Both districts indicate potential for increased revenues due to raised daily attendance, but any such revenues would be partially offset by site costs, counselling aides and increased operating costs.

Other findings, however, lead us to question the wisdom of focussing concern for disaffected youth solely on attendance programs. Such programs must address the goal of student attendance, and be coupled with efforts to ensure appropriate education services for all students. Both Los Angeles and Fresno reiterate that a crucial component of their programs is the provision of counselling services early in the process of school difficulty which is characterized by truancy. Such counselling can link students with educational programs to suit their need.

Miscellaneous Attendance Programs

Public education and awareness efforts to increase public attention to the problem of nonattendance have been undertaken in some communities.

Such efforts may increase parent responsibility for attendance. Immediate parent contact when a student is absent, and offering to assist if a problem is present, reduces absenteeism. Requirements that such contact be made may increase costs for attendance personnel, and may reduce time available for the much needed student guidance and counselling services discussed elsewhere in this report.

One recommendation is that local districts develop plans for ensuring parent notification.[48] Such plans should use SARB's, parent advisory committees, general parent education programs, and other ways to accomplish notification by using community resources without additional cost or counselling staff time.

Most sources who discuss absenteeism or dropouts in the context of attendance and truancy programs suggest that expansion of educational options to provide relevant learning experiences for all students is successful. Such expansion is a positive option, rather than punitive, and recognizes that the responsibility for failure to educate belongs to the school and community, as well as to the parent and student. Options would include continuation schools, independent study, work experience, vocational education and other nontraditional learning experiences.

All the successful attendance and truancy programs we reviewed or visited had common themes:

- expectations and outcomes are clearly defined;
- policies are consistently enforced; and
- programs are developed with broad participation, including parents and students.

CONTINUATION HIGH SCHOOLS

Continuation high schools provide an alternative to full-time comprehensive high school, and have become an integral part of the secondary system. Continuation schools provide part-time schooling for young people with employment or other needs in a setting that focuses on individualized instruction, preparation for work, and basic skill acquisition.

Continuation high schools were established in 1919, the same time compulsory education was extended to 16- and 17-year-olds, primarily to serve the needs of working students.[49] The target group has been expanded to include dropouts and potential dropouts, truants, young people involved in juvenile court proceedings, children with behavioral problems, children with health and disability conditions that limit full-time schooling, and young parents.[50] In the 1977-78 school year, 366 school districts maintained either continuation high schools or special continuation classes (sometimes combined with regional occupational programs) geared to serve part-time students.[51]

Students at continuation high schools must meet district graduation requirements and stringent attendance requirements, but the hours are flexible depending on the students' work schedules. Students are required to meet district proficiency standards. Continuation schools operate with a 20 to one student-teacher ratio, and state level

administrators stress that a small, individualized setting is necessary to serve the needs of the nontraditional learners who are attracted to such schools. Counselling is a critical element to such schools, providing support for student achievement goals and employment, and follow-up counselling for truants and those youth with absence and discipline problems. The individualized curriculum stresses diagnosis of individual learning styles and goals, flexibility in hours and work assignments, and student responsibility for achievement based on negotiated contracts for learning goals.[52]

Continuation high schools have been the primary program for dropouts in California secondary schools. Our interviews and on-site visits discovered several strengths and weaknesses in this alternative education setting. Strong points in the continuation model are:

- Small class and school size.
- Flexible curricula, with individualized learning processes.
- Strong counselling component.
- Commitment to general education or the acquisition of basic skills in the context of a transition to work or further education and training.
- Newly established monitoring and technical assistance by the State Department of Education to support quality programming.

Problems raised in our review of continuation high schools are as follows:

- Low esteem and status in the secondary education system, because continuation schools are sometimes seen as a dumping ground for "bad kids." Some districts view continuation high schools as a treatment program, rather than an alternative to the regular system, with the goal being the return of the students to comprehensive high school. This suggests, continuation high schools may need increased recognition as a responsive and credible alternative learning environment.

- Unclear enrollment policies in some schools, with students who voluntarily enroll, who are referred by juvenile courts or SARB's, or younger students with problems who have been referred from disciplinary treatment programs. Continuation schools need better defined goals and enrollment policies which set priorities and identify the types of students they can best serve;

- Lack of state level monitoring to determine how many continuation high school students finish school. There is also a lack of information on how continuation high school curricula fit into proficiency exams established by districts.

Continuation high schools have established a learning mode that closes many of the gaps our research identified in the formal, academically focussed comprehensive high schools. The most needed component is education and leadership at the state administrative and legislative levels to encourage individualized alternative education for students whose future in comprehensive high schools will likely be failure. Close attention to the use of continuation schools for disciplinary

treatment, which may reduce the effectiveness of providing an education for young people who are ready to transition to work or more specific training, is also needed.

COUNSELLING

Counselling services can help identify and treat young people who have low attendance records or are potential school dropouts. Many of these young people have a poor self-image, and there is a strong correlation between self-concept and achievement. In fact, the literature on dropouts finds a stronger correlation between self-concept and achievement than between ability and academic achievement.[53]

School dropouts frequently move into dead-end, low paying jobs or unemployment. There is clearly a need for more information in schools about job opportunities and career planning.

Finally, the need for assistance with personal problems tends to be higher among young people who leave school. Some of these young people have few parent or community resources to assist them with the task of growing to adulthood. Counselling can help alienated young people understand themselves, relate to others, deal with health problems; it can also provide nutrition information, assist with understanding of emerging sexuality and potential parenthood.

Counselling programs are permissive, but are usually provided at the secondary school level. State law and regulations provide a framework for such services that includes educational, career and personal counselling for students, testing services and consultation with parents and staff. Staffing of counselling programs has increased about

30 percent during the past 10 years, partly due to federally funded categorical programs, community pressure for better counselling programs, and encouragement by the Department of Education for upgraded counselling programs.[54] However, the ratio of students to guidance staff in urban high schools ranges from 250 to one to 400 to one, and many counsellors feel overwhelmed by a lack of program planning and excess paperwork.

In spite of increased public support and staff resources for counselling and guidance programs, students in secondary schools, particularly in urban areas, express the need for better planned, more confidential, and more comprehensive guidance services. There are gaps in the areas of information and guidance for realistic job placement and career planning, including future education; direction to appropriate courses for graduation; and assistance in understanding themselves and relating to others. Students speak of a lack of coordination between in-school and out-of-school resources, and the isolation of the secondary school from "real life." They also feel a lack of regular and timely input to planning and evaluating counselling services, and that there is persistent sexist and racist stereotyping in career counselling, job placement, class assignments and access to college information.

A Statewide Task Force on School Counselling was convened by Assemblyman Gary Hart, Chairman of the Assembly Subcommittee on Education Reform. The recommendations made by the task force are based on current, documented analyses of counselling services in California schools.[55] Some of the findings of the task force have direct implications for this study:

- Explicit planning for guidance and counselling should occur at each school, specifying resources, objectives, financing and evaluation.

- Training, certification and recruitment of staff is vital. Students want and need realistic, sympathetic counsellors who are able to relate to their culture and background, and in ratios to ensure that counsellors are available when needed. Good programs depend on good staff, appropriately supported.

- Students must be confident about the confidentiality of student-counsellor relationships.

- Students must be involved in designing and evaluating services.

- Statewide information on needs is piecemeal, and there is no system for sharing, evaluating and disseminating good programs and research projects. At the local level, in-school and out-of-school guidance programs are not coordinated, making schools an isolated experience for students and leading to duplication of services or waste of resources. Mandates and incentives must exist for coordination between community youth and training work programs, drug and alcohol abuse programs, and adult and vocational education programs. Such coordination should begin at the state level among the State Departments of Education, Employment Development, Mental Health, Social Services, Developmental Services, and Youth Authority.

INDEPENDENT STUDY

Students whose needs are not being met by traditional schooling need other forms of education to attain the skills and knowledge

necessary for adulthood. Independent study is one way to adapt education to meet varying student needs, schedules, and personal growth and development.

State law provides that school districts may operate independent study programs in grades K-12 (Education Code 46300), opportunity schools, or continuation high schools (Education Code 51745). Such programs require a contract signed by a parent, student and teacher specifying individual learning objectives, and ways of evaluating the learning. The programs are under the general supervision of a certificated teacher. Students enrolled in independent study must meet the same graduation and proficiency requirements as other students. The course of instruction may or may not include some classes in the regular school program.

The program can be adapted to serve the needs of students with special or unique educational interests; those who have difficulty adapting to regular classes; students with full-time work or family schedules; and those with special medical or handicapping conditions.

During the 1977-78 school year, 159 districts provided independent study for 12,956 students.[56] Some districts have established off-campus sites for independent study programs. Programs may provide career counselling, job information, job skills workshops and personal counselling.

Most programs explicitly aim at assisting high school dropouts, reducing the truancy rate, and providing an alternative structure of learning for students who expect to fail the high school proficiency

exam. District boards may refer a student to independent study in lieu of expulsion, and SARB's may refer students as part of a program to reduce truancy or behavioral problems.[57]

Existing programs have a high retention rate for students previously not in school or who had high absentee rates (two-thirds of the 230 students in Project Outreach, Mt. Diablo Unified School District's independent studies program, fall in the category of actual or potential dropouts).

Independent study programs serve a variety of clientele, including young mothers with full-time child care responsibilities, students with full-time jobs and family support responsibilities, and students on extended travel with their families.

San Mateo is one school district which has successfully operated independent study programs. Students have used independent study to create a handcrafted wood products corporation. Other students have received independent credit for time spent learning to operate school district data processing equipment. San Mateo students gain credit from a series of visits to museums, ethnic neighborhoods, lecture sites and other places of the arts and humanities. Students can develop a farm, set up a cross-age tutoring program, or act as apprentices to workers.[58]

Independent study programs, operated fairly, firmly, with appropriate proficiency standards and with creativity, can reduce the number of young people out of school and out of work. Program level personnel made several observations and recommendations concerning independent study programs:

- It is necessary to reduce the stigma attached to dropout and truancy reduction programs through public education about (a) the role of alternative education in increasing student competence rather than reducing standards, and (b) the use of such programs by a wide range of students, including gifted and talented young people.

- It is necessary to increase state level technical assistance and leadership including staff development resources and dissemination of effective program models. Such leadership should include the development of more specific guidelines for program development.

- Resource constraints do not inhibit program development, as these programs pay for themselves in increased attendance. However, administrative cutbacks and general local fiscal concerns may have reduced district willingness to experiment. Moreover, planning resources for program development are limited.

- Independent study is one approach to meeting current demands for increased family choices for alternate education, and provides an alternative for students to achieve high school proficiencies.

- Program personnel networks are necessary to support program staff and students.

- Trained, committed and creative staff are vital to success.

- Programs should be structured so that student expectations and responsibilities are clear, the tasks are manageable, and reliable methods for evaluation are available. Recordkeeping is necessary

so that student progress can be monitored and maintained and the student's whereabouts known.

- Students should participate fully in program design and in individual contract goals. The programs should remain flexible to changing student needs.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

The statutory objective of vocational education is "...to provide an educational opportunity to the end that every student leaving school shall have the opportunity to be prepared to enter the world of work" (Education Code Section 51004).

California statutes provide general policy direction for vocational education programs, set specific requirements for administration of the programs, and outline general options for delivering vocational education. The particular method for delivering vocational education, however, is largely left up to the school districts.

State statutes do not provide special categorical funding of vocational eduction; instead, state funds are distributed through the normal school apportionment process and districts are free to offer either academic or vocational courses as they choose.

Federal funds are provided under Public Law 94-482 for the state to distribute to local agencies that operate vocational education programs. Public Law 94-482 contains complex and specific mandates as to how these federal funds may be spent. Such funds presently constitute less than eight percent of all public expenditures for vocational education in the

state. Because California lacks clear statutory policy direction for vocational education programs, compliance with federal mandates has become the major activity of state and local vocational education planners.

The Career Education Incentive Act (Public Law 95-207) provides federal funds which are granted directly to local education agencies to design and implement career education programs. Career education is defined by the act as the "...totality of experiences...through which one learns about and prepares to engage in work..."

Three employment training programs are tied to high school vocational education: 1) the California Worksite Education and Training Program (Chapter 1181, Statutes of 1979); 2) the California Youth Employment and Development Act (Chapter 678, Statutes of 1977); and 3) the federal Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA) Title IV Youth Programs.

The California Worksite Education and Training Program (CWETA) integrates classroom instruction with worksite training programs. It provides funds for distribution by the state Employment Development Department (EDD) to school districts, community colleges, employers, employee organizations, CETA prime sponsors, and community based organizations to establish new classroom and worksite training programs that stress coordination between such agencies. Programs funded under CWETA must focus on economically disadvantaged persons, youth, displaced workers and structurally unemployed persons.

CETA Title IV youth programs are administered by EDD and cover a broad range of employment and training programs, including work experience training in the public sector and exploratory work experience in the private sector for economically disadvantaged youth. The majority of these funds go to CETA prime sponsors. In some cases schools may work with prime sponsors to provide contracted services for youth.

The California Youth Employment and Development Act funds are also distributed by the EDD. These funds are made available to prime sponsors, school districts and community organizations in order to stimulate innovative approaches in providing employment and training services to youth. Such projects may involve school districts with prime sponsors or community organizations in an effort to improve school-to-work transition for youth.

Exemplary Vocational Education Programs

In order to identify program designs that offer benefits to youth that are in some way better than those provided by the typical vocational education program, we visited four school districts that were identified by various vocational education experts as being "exemplary." We were specifically interested in identifying why these types of programs are not being operated in other districts, and how the state could encourage more widespread innovation such as these programs exhibit. The four school districts visited were San Diego Unified, Santa Ana Unified, Alhambra Unified and Modesto City Schools.

I. San Diego Unified School District

Career education. San Diego schools have taken unusually strong steps toward implementing career education in its broadest sense. The San Diego governing board adopted a career education policy in 1971 that could serve as a model for a state statutory career education policy.

In 1972, a career education unit was established in the district's program division. Career education staff have developed curriculum modules designed to be used in almost every course offered in the district. In addition, staff have developed tools and materials to help students become more aware of their career goals and design their own program to meet these goals, and to help the staff understand and implement career education concepts. Considerable time and effort was spent encouraging teachers to use the career education materials.

In addition, the district established career centers at various high schools, each of which provides training in different occupational clusters (i.e., a group of jobs that are closely related). These centers draw attention to career education and lend public credibility to occupational programs. The career center programs were perceived by students as a respectable alternative to the college preparatory program at their school. The career centers are a major function of each high school rather than being the last resort for those who fail at academic instruction.

Comprehensive district approach. The career centers located at different high schools specialize in providing training and work experience in a particular occupational cluster. This allows the

district to concentrate its resources on establishing one well-funded high quality program in each major occupational area at separate high schools, rather than trying to establish comprehensive vocational programs at every high school. Students are allowed to transfer to a career center high school to take a specific program offered there.

As an example of the type of program offered, one school located near a high technology, industry and automotive dealership sector of the city operates a Career Center for Industry. The programs offered by the center are automobile body repair and painting, engine rebuilding, auto parts merchandising, occupational metal work, machine shop technician, and electrician's assistant. Other career centers offer programs in medicine and health, marketing, graphics, management, communication and commerce, and business and office management.

II. Santa Ana Unified School District

Career technical park. The career technical park concept, as developed by the Santa Ana schools, stresses the involvement of business and industry in vocational education. In Santa Ana success rests in part on the abundance of technical industry in the area. The schools have turned to the community for help in dealing with problems of a shortage of technically trained workers and a high youth unemployment rate.

Santa Ana works closely with the Regional Occupational Centers and Programs (ROC/P's) operated by Orange County schools. Orange County ROC/P's were established in accordance with Section 52300 et seq. of the Education Code, and in Santa Ana typically rely on business and industry to provide off-school laboratory experience. The ROC/P courses are designed to teach basic skills that are identified by the business

community as necessary to start in a particular field. These skills are taught in special intensive two- or three-week classroom courses before the student is placed in a work experience position (some students are placed in work experience positions directly without these special courses).

Each high school has a career center which is staffed by certificated teachers who either work full-time in the center, or half-time in the center and half-time in the classroom. As part of the program, ninth grade pupils may take a one-semester career orientation/exploration course designed to provide classroom instruction in work habits, work attitudes and career decision-making skills, and to expose students to career information. Prior to the current school year, all ninth grade pupils were required to take the career course.

Any student may use the center regardless of whether he or she has taken the orientation course. The center staff offers individualized career guidance and assistance to students who want to explore career opportunities. The center also serves as the primary source of referrals to ROC/P's.

The centers have computer access to a district-wide data base containing the names of over 1,500 private employers who have agreed to place students in exploratory or training positions. The data base is keyed by occupational area, and enables the district to track the attendance of students in school and at work and to assess their progress toward identified career goals. Because staff recognized that coordination between academic counselling services and career center services is inadequate at times, academic counsellors are required to help

students develop four-year career plans. However, some counsellors do not routinely refer pupils to the career centers, and, due to the elimination of Santa Ana's career course requirement, pupils are no longer required to use the career centers. As a result, a student's educational program may be developed by his or her counsellor without the benefit of the student having explored his or her career interests and aptitudes. This makes it easier for counsellors, who often type-cast students as either a college preparatory or vocational student, to channel students into programs without giving them the opportunity to explore their real interests and aptitudes.

III. Alhambra Unified School District

Lockyer 50/50 Program. This program (established by Chapter 678, Statutes of 1978 (AB 1398, Lockyer)) is a demonstration project, funded by the state through the California Youth Employment and Development Act and operated by Alhambra Unified School District.

The program is designed to help disadvantaged students develop better work attitudes and habits and gain certain basic work skills. The district feels these attitudes, habits and skills can be taught most effectively in a "real world" private sector work experience program.

To provide "real world" work experiences for these youth, the district designed a program that offers incentives to private sector employers to hire disadvantaged youth for closely supervised part-time work. The incentives are as follows: 1) the district pays 50 percent of the cost of the student's wage and 100 percent of fringe benefits, and the employer pays the remaining 50 percent of the student's wages

(hence the title "50/50 Program"); and 2) the district is the legal employer, thus relieving the work experience employer of the paperwork and costs associated with payroll and fringe benefits. The district feels that these incentives make the program unique and that without them, it is impossible to obtain the degree of business involvement necessary to meet the special needs of disadvantaged students.

In 1979, only students eligible for CETA funds were allowed to participate in the 50/50 Program. Students who successfully completed the CETA work experience program and related course of instruction were placed in 50/50 Program work experience positions. If appropriate, students were also enrolled in related vocational education courses. After completing the 50/50 Program, students were placed in unsubsidized employment or encouraged to continue in a ROC/P work experience program.

District staff cite as evidence of program success: 1) a 75 percent placement rate among students who complete the program and who seek immediate employment; 2) highly positive responses from participating youth and employers to a questionnaire survey; and 3) positive personal contacts with employers.

Benefits to the young people mentioned by staff include 1) greater participation by small businesses, which have a greater community spirit and interest in helping local youth; 2) encouragement for dropouts to return to school because program participants are paid to remain in school and, in most cases, employers communicate the importance of obtaining a high school diploma to participating students; and 3) students gain "real world" work experiences.

Benefits to employers are 1) positive public relations, and 2) an opportunity to develop potential productive employees with a minimum amount of paperwork, administration and financial risk.

IV. Modesto City High School District

Career centers. Each high school in Modesto has a career center where students can talk with counsellors and career guidance specialists. The students can use a variety of resources designed to help pupils define their career goals, explore possible careers, establish career plans, learn work habits and explore their work attitudes. Freshmen high school students are given a general orientation and are required to complete certain career exploration activities in the center. In their sophomore year, students must take a career decision-making course, which includes a vocational aptitude test and related activities in the centers. After completing the course, each student works with a school counsellor to develop a four-year career plan. Based on this plan, the student and counsellor decide which academic and vocational courses the student should take and what kinds of work experience and job training programs to which the student should be referred. A coordinator in every center helps tie the ROC/P into the career guidance and counselling process by consulting with the student and counsellor. Counselling and career center activities are closely integrated for all students.

Vocational evaluation center. The vocational evaluation center is a mobile testing facility designed to test pupils for employability skills. It serves handicapped pupils primarily. It focuses on tests of manual dexterity and basic thought processes.

The unusual aspects of the center are its mobility and close ties with various agencies and programs serving handicapped students. The ability to move the testing facility between different schools, shopping centers and government centers throughout Stanislaus County allows greater services at lower cost. More important, however, are the close inter-agency and program ties that allow the schools to maximize use of available resources for helping handicapped youth to become employable. Stanislaus County CETA youth programs, the Department of Rehabilitation, and the Modesto schools cooperatively maintain the center; and each agency refers handicapped youth to the center for evaluation. A report is developed on each student that summarizes test results and recommends the kind of work that best suits the student and the instruction, work experience and other services necessary to help the student become employable. The results of evaluations at the center are used in the development of Individualized Education Plans for handicapped students under the Master Plan for Special Education.

Conclusions

The programs discussed above demonstrated innovative methods, such as Alhambra's 50/50 Program and Santa Ana's career technical park approach, and exemplary efforts toward implementing established methods, such as San Diego's and Modesto's accomplishments in career education.

These methods alone, however, do not explain the success of the programs. The most impressive factor was the dedication and energy of individual school level staff in meeting the needs of students. Thus, an important conclusion is that it would be impossible to mandate successful programs without the cooperation of local staff. The state

can provide the leadership and resources necessary for successful programs, however, without getting in the way of local creativity or discouraging individual commitment and energy.

Local staff noted the following barriers to implementing programs:

Too much regulation. The primary complaint of the three urban school districts (Alhambra, Santa Ana and San Diego) is that the state and federal government placed too many restrictions on use of funds. These restrictions result in excessive paperwork and complex administrative relations with the state, which interfere with efforts to develop new programs. More important, the regulatory requirements are so specific they do not allow districts any flexibility to design programs to meet unique needs of local students and potential employers. This discourages the involvement of business and industry, which are very important to the success of a vocational program.

Modesto city school staff, however, did not agree that regulation was a major problem. They felt that many districts simply do not take the time to develop innovative programs which meet regulatory requirements. Due to smaller size, the Modesto city schools may find it easier to design appropriate programs within regulatory requirements. Modesto schools undoubtedly do not encounter the breadth or size of problems faced by a big city district, nor do they face the task of reconciling the different and sometimes conflicting regulations attached to the myriad of related youth programs normally associated with a highly urbanized setting.

The 50/50 Program in Alhambra is an example of an effort to remedy the problem of over-regulation and to provide incentives for involvement of business and industry in vocational education. Funds for this demonstration project are the only funds available. There is no ongoing funding for this type of program.

The Alhambra staff recommends that the state provide additional funds for developing such innovative approaches. In addition, they recommend that a source be developed for ongoing funding of a 50/50-type program that does not entail burdensome and prohibitive regulations. Specifically, they have concerns about state administrative regulations, and Department of Education's policies and guidelines for cooperative vocational education programs. These regulations and policies are designed to prevent private businesses involved in these programs from "exploiting" students. The department's concern is that some employers, notably fast-food service chains, have been known to employ students who are paid with public funds in productive jobs without providing any substantial educational benefit to the student. The Alhambra staff argues that these regulations are too restrictive, and in an effort to prevent a limited amount of abuse, the regulations discourage business and industry participation in the programs.

Lack of statutory policy direction for vocational education. All district staff felt that statutory direction is needed to help define the purpose of vocational education and tie together the numerous sources of funding. The urban districts, however, were much more concerned about their difficulties in coordinating different sources of funding than were the Modesto city schools.

Another primary concern expressed was the current confusion over the different roles of secondary and community college vocational education, particularly with respect to adult vocational education.

The predominant opinion among the district staff we visited was that the statutory goal of secondary vocational education should be to provide every student with the basic skills necessary to assume an entry level position of employment upon high school graduation and to instill the work attitudes, work habits, career planning and job seeking skills necessary to find and keep employment related to their career goals. It is good if a student leaves high school with specific occupational skills beyond the entry level, but it is more important for high schools to concentrate on teaching basic employability skills. Specific occupational skills can be developed later, either on the job or through adult schools or community colleges. Staff felt there was a particular need for this kind of policy direction for high schools.

San Diego staff felt that statutes should emphasize career education and felt that overall statewide career educational goals need to be established. They feel that the potential of career education has been missed in most districts because it is perceived as an adjunct to, or a single course within, vocational education rather than a total educational approach. The San Diego governing board has adopted a district policy which could serve as a model for a state career education policy. It is interesting to note, however, that the Modesto city schools have, in some respects, implemented a more comprehensive career education approach, although they lack the sophisticated career education curriculum developed by San Diego. The Modesto schools have accomplished this

without a career education policy by their board. Not surprisingly, the Modesto staff spent far less time praising the concept of career education than San Diego staff. This suggests that the status of career education is primarily dependent on the individual level rather than district level commitment to career education concepts. Thus, any state career education policy should be accompanied by efforts to instill positive attitudes toward career education among school staff.

Back to basics movement. All districts expressed concern that the "back to basics" movement was harming vocational and career education programs. In response to public pressure, district governing boards have adopted additional academic course requirements for graduation. Students are often forced to drop vocational education courses in order to take the additional academic courses necessary for graduation. Many students were placed in vocational education programs because they failed in the mainstream college preparatory program. To take these students out of vocational programs, which are more relevant to their needs than most academic courses, in order to place them in an environment in which they are bound to fail, is counterproductive.

In addition, basic proficiency requirements established by districts are usually defined in terms of academic skills rather than work related and basic employment skills. As a result, vocationally oriented students are ill-equipped to pass proficiency exams, and, often must drop vocational education courses to take remedial academic courses.

TEENAGE PREGNANCY

As stated previously, adolescent pregnancy is often associated with school dropouts among young women: most of the girls who become pregnant at 17 or younger never complete high school. Those who leave high school usually lack the skills necessary to find reliable employment. They are unlikely to return to school after their baby's birth. The adolescent mother often will turn to welfare dependency for financial support for herself and her child.[59]

Education Code Sections 8390-8397 established the High School Infant Care and Development Services Program. The program, which is administered by the Office of Child Development, State Department of Education, provides services such as group care for infants of school age mothers, parenting, child development, family planning education for parents and other students on an elective basis, and health screening and treatment for infants. School districts or county superintendents of schools enter into agreements with the State Superintendent of Public Instruction for the purpose of operating these programs and providing services. The program also establishes an infant center on or near the high school that the parents attend. This child care center enables the infant's parents to continue their secondary education; the infant center also serves as a laboratory for parenting education. Available statistics indicate that school-age parents who have participated in this program have returned to high school, graduated, and have entered either the work force or attended college with greater frequency than is ordinarily found among teenage parents.[60] The program served 2,109 children during the 1979-80 fiscal year.[61]

The Pregnant Minors Program, a subsection of programs for physically handicapped pupils under Education Code Section 56701 et seq., is administered by the Office of Special Education, State Department of Education. Under this program, pregnant minors are placed in a separate class under special education as soon as the pregnancy is diagnosed. The students may remain in the program until they complete the semester during which the baby is born. This program has traditionally been operated using a self-contained classroom limited to 20 students. The program served 2,954 pregnant minors in 191 special classes, as of February 1978.[62]

Regulations for the Pregnant Minors Program require that the program of study be supplemented by counselling and guidance, and instruction in the areas of prenatal care, postnatal care, and child development.

The Federal Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Programs, which was created by the Adolescent Health Services and Pregnancy Prevention Care Act of 1978, has among its objectives:

1) Development and expansion of services to prevent initial and repeat adolescent pregnancies;

2) Encouragement of linkages among public and private community organizations providing services for pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents;

3) Assisting pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents to become productive, independent contributors to family and community life.

The Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Programs stresses a number of core and supplemental services which must be included in each project if it is to be considered comprehensive. These services include: pregnancy testing, maternity counselling and referral; family planning services; primary and preventive health services, including prenatal and postnatal care; nutrition information and counselling; infant day care; referral for venereal disease screening and treatment; and referral for appropriate vocational, educational and health services.

Any public or nonprofit private organization which demonstrates the capability of providing these services is eligible for a grant under this program. Technical assistance is available from the Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Programs to help communities develop innovative approaches to meeting the health, education, and social services needs of pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents and to insure that essential services are targeted to areas of greatest need.

The program primarily emphasizes serving adolescents who are 17 years and under. The legislation gives priority to applicants who serve areas where there is a high incidence of adolescent pregnancy, a high number of low-income families and a low availability of pregnancy related services. Special consideration for funding is also given to the needs of adolescents in underserved rural areas.

The Department of Education has identified several problems with the Pregnant Minors Program. Specifically, a lack of adequate child care facilities and follow-up activities may prohibit mothers from continuing in regular education programs after the child is born.[63]

An independent Child Care and Development Commission, established by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, concluded in its final report that the high school Infant Care and Development Services Program is one of the most cost-effective means of meeting the needs of both teenage parents and their infants.[64]

Most participating students who responded to a questionnaire from the Department of Education concerning the need for the Infant Care and Development Program, responded that, without the program, they would not have been able to return to school and complete work for their high school diploma.[65]

Finally, most providers and consumers would agree that deficiencies in current programs center around a lack in the community of those components which the federal Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Programs are designed to support: counselling, information and referral, and coordinated service delivery.

POLICY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

We have analyzed the size and composition of the group of young people in California whose connection with school is limited or absent. We have reviewed the literature and discussed with practitioners in the field why these young people are out of school.

There are 300,000 young people ages 12 through 17, representing 13 percent of the total age group, who are out of school. One-third of these youth are working at jobs with little future. One-half of them are female. Most of the young people out of school are White, with Blacks and Hispanics only somewhat more likely to be out of school than their age-mates. Low-income and working class youth are, to a significant degree, more likely to be out of school than high-income youth. The few jobs available to young people of this age group are more likely to go to youth who are still in school, or to young Whites from families with higher incomes. Young men are much more likely to be working than young women. A substantial portion of the young women who are out of school and out of work left school to marry and/or have children, or left for other reasons and married or had children shortly after leaving. Many of these young people have had a history of academic failure or difficulty. All of them have had a period when they were identified by themselves, their peers and the school as being different, incapable, troubled, delinquent or handicapped. Most have a low self-image.

It is difficult not to conclude that these young people have in effect been pushed out of school because of the lack of appropriate programs. In human terms, the future for these young people is not

bright, and leaving school is not a reasonable choice among alternative paths to the future. The consequences of leaving school are sufficiently negative to doubt it is done by informed choice.

We have reviewed programs established to treat dropouts or potential dropouts, and have found that it is possible to create successful programs for divergent learners. Diverse educational settings are rarely more costly than academic training for college-bound young people, and many examples exist of local programs which work to serve diverse student needs.

Before discussing the policy conclusions we have reached as a result of our review and analysis, two proposals should be examined which are sometimes made to address the issue of dropouts.

Reducing the Compulsory Age Requirements

Lowering the age for compulsory school attendance is occasionally proposed as a solution to the problem of older school dropouts. Our review has shown, however, that successful alternative work and family futures are not necessarily available to young people who leave school early. The dropout is generally not a successful student who matures early. The failure represented in dropping out is in large part a failure of the schools to provide an environment which can accommodate students with a variety of needs. Lowering the compulsory school attendance age would not solve the dropout problem. Instead, it would remove the pressure on parents, and, above all, institutions serving youth to provide the basic skills needed for adulthood.

Imposing Legal Sanctions

It is sometimes proposed that we return to the concept of treating truancy as a crime, and focus legal and administrative resources on punishment for young people below age 18 who are out of school. This solution, as the one above, proposes that the dropout problem reflects personal failure on the part of students, rather than a failure of educational and other youth-serving programs. Moreover, imposing legal punishment for truancy raises a basic question regarding the purpose of school. Enforced attendance cannot contribute much to the acquisition of proficiency skills for adult work and living, which are among the goals of education. We have seen that programs to provide skills which are relevant to the adult world in an environment that values the personalities and various learning styles of all young people do bring school dropouts and nonattenders back into the school system. We believe these types of programs are a more appropriate and desirable public policy alternative than jailing nonviolent, nondestructive young people who have already suffered the stigma of school failure.

POLICY CONCLUSIONS

We have outlined below general conclusions within which policy to address the problem of young people who are out of school can be framed. We do not suggest specific remedies, but are hopeful that our conclusion will provide the basis for discussion among legislators, practitioners, parents and young people and the development of successful strategies for strengthening the school system's capacity to serve a variety of learning styles.

There is a need for effective state leadership in encouraging districts to provide a variety of ways to develop student skills and competence, with appropriate ways to certify that competence.

All students need certain proficiencies and credentials to succeed in the adult work and social arenas. A review of the literature and our interviews indicate virtually all young people seek specific work or academic competence.

The standard comprehensive high school too often teaches and credentials a limited set of cognitive skills appropriate for further education, but not immediately transferable to the world of work. Some young people need jobs or an alternative to higher education. Failure of the schools to effectively address the needs of these students by assisting them with the transition from school to work, or providing them with an education consistent with the transition, has made school of little use to such students.

Without stigma or a reduction in "standards," the secondary school system must acknowledge the various futures of California's young people and develop appropriate alternative programs. The goal of establishing a more formal and recognized array of alternatives should not be to "hold" young people in school, but to appropriately link young adults to jobs and careers. For example, such a linkage may involve the school's provision of limited basic skill training prior to placement in existing community or workplace job training programs.

In addition to the problem of jobs, young people face significant daily health, family and economic problems. High school curricula should include programs designed to teach students how to deal with

practical probelms such as how to budget, pick a roommate, rent an apartment, find health care and social services and establish credit.

Some of the program personnel we interviewed questioned whether locally developed proficiency examinations accurately measured nonacademic skills and work-related proficiency. No one suggested that proficiency examinations be eliminated, or that standards for graduation and school accountability are inappropriate for potential dropouts or any other group of young people. It was suggested, however, that the proficiency tests currently used should be examined to determine their relevance to future employability of these young people. The goal of such an examination should be to help local districts develop realistic and appropriate proficiency standards.

The state, administratively and legislatively, must provide the necessary leadership to assure local development of educational alternatives and competency credentialling. Our review indicates that alternative education programs that succeed in credentialling skills for a broad range of futures are not more costly than the core programs in most comprehensive high schools. In general, neither new authority nor new money are needed.

Decisions about how to accomplish goals, structure programs, identify student/program matches, and measure success must be made at the local level. Local program personnel in our study repeatedly claimed that rigid categorical programs and specific program funding and regulation hampered development of alternatives.

There is a need for state education and youth employment program administrators to disseminate information to practitioners on program models which provide a variety of education and training opportunities appropriate for dropouts and encourage replication of those models.

We have examined various programs which have succeeded in keeping young people in school or have brought dropouts back to school. We have deemed programs to be successful based on their ability to attract and hold a variety of divergent learners and to certify students who have achieved basic work or academic proficiencies. Such evaluation should be a part of program dissemination and program monitoring by the state in its efforts to attack the dropout problem.

We found that the characteristics of programs that achieve a reduction in dropouts and provide a broad range of students with proficiencies are similar, whether the program is based in a continuation school, is an independent study program, a vocational education or a pregnancy and parenting model. Successful programs include:

- Development of relevant, tangible skills, connected with income earning jobs.
- Development of self-esteem, intimacy, recognition and self-preservation skills that many young people lack.
- Strong student input so that young people participate in decisions to assure that programs meet their individual needs.
- Formulation of effective networks with community groups and agencies, including medical personnel, employers, unions and community youth workers.

- Committed staff who seek the assignment.
- Public information designed to improve community understanding of the problem and develop public commitment to serving the diversity of young people.
- Larger program networks that support, strengthen and expand the impact of individual programs.
- Appropriate accountability and monitoring systems that provide incentives to achieve program goals.

These elements make a significant contribution to the success of a program serving troubled youth. They do not by themselves, however, guarantee success. Organizational features of the school or district that supports planned innovation are more important than specific program design.

<u>There is a need for legislatively established attendance and enrollment goals for local districts, with fiscal incentives for attaining these goals</u>.

The concept of attendance and enrollment goals implies that school districts would have to achieve statutorily imposed benchmarks such as an enrollment goal of 98 percent of a district's total school age youth, and an attendance goal that specifies no fewer than 94 percent of the enrollment will be in school at any point in time. To achieve such goals districts would have to develop programs that respond to the

diverse needs of students. The local school attendance review board could be responsible for assuring an appropriate match between the various educational alternatives and individual student needs.

Financial incentives already exist to encourage increased enrollment and attendance (i.e., state reimbursement based on a school's average daily attendance). Additional negative fiscal sanctions could also be imposed on districts that failed by a specified margin to achieve their enrollment and attendance goals over an extended period of time. Such negative fiscal sanctions, however, may impose financial hardship on those districts most in need.

A more prudent approach would be to provide positive fiscal incentives for those districts which show the greatest improvement in reducing attendance problems and school dropouts over a predetermined period of time. These fiscal incentives could include funding for programs outside the core instructional program that encourage individualized alternatives. These include planning, counselling and guidance, field trips, student projects, video equipment and other tools to individualize the curriculum, staff development programs to develop organizational skills, communication skills, group problem solving and leadership.

<u>There is a need to revise current guidelines for School Attendance Review Board operations to ensure timely, early referral of students to programs that meet their individual needs.</u>

Students should be referred to alternative educational models before a pattern of repeated failure is established. Present practice frequently provides intervention and treatment only when poor student

attendance has become a pattern, and school failure is a reality for the student. New guidelines should include specific SARB responsibility for community education about available alternatives, and elicit community involvement in developing a network of educational alternatives that prepare students for existing jobs.

A variety of alternatives for students presently exist, including continuation high school, independent study, alternative education, opportunity schools, vocational education, pregnancy and parenting programs, and others. However, young people in large comprehensive high schools have limited information about these opportunities. Staff in large districts are often not aware of community alternatives in work preparation, apprenticeship training and community service, all of which could become part of an individual student's learning program. School administrators as well as SARB's should share in the responsibility for student and parent information about such alternatives.

In general, the legal and social stigma which accompany leaving school hinder outreach efforts to serve young people. SARB guidelines should encourage the development of alternatives as soon as the student exhibits difficulty with school. We have heard and read repeatedly that most dropouts have problems that begin in late grade school, and that leaving high school is not an isolated act but the logical conclusion of a history of failure.

<u>There is a need to further study the effect of larger schools on the dropout rate.</u>

As enrollments decline many school districts are now consolidating several schools into one large school. However, large schools may exacerbate the problems of potential dropouts. The students we have interviewed in this study, and maybe most students, need small group education in a setting where adults and adult regulations are firm, consistent and caring. The large, socially and academically competitive class setting that characterizes most high schools is not conducive to the best learning for a number of young people.

FOOTNOTES

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